Southern Projects submission

September 2021

In summary

Doing nothing now about our transport challenges will mean a less vibrant, less liveable, more congested Greater Hobart over the next 30 years.

Building more roads is not the answer, given Hobart's geography and the enormous cost of bypasses and tunnels.

The private vehicle remains the most convenient commuting option for people but congestion, cost, stress and environmental impacts will take us to a tipping point.

Public transport must be more responsive to consumer needs and the Southern Projects plan is a step in the right direction.

The RACT supports, in principle, the initiatives outlined in the Southern Projects, including the T3 rapid transit lane on the Southern Outlet.

Southern Projects is just one part of the solution – it must be integrated with other initiatives if it is to deliver the l transport mode change that will help ease Hobart's growing congestion issue.

The challenge

The RACT's Greater Hobart Mobility Vision, published in 2019, lays out the challenges that the Southern Projects seeks to address over the next 30 years.

https://hobartvision.ract.com.au/

Congestion has become a major issue for residents and the Southern Projects are a reaction to that pressure.

Citizens are also raising concerns about the increasing environmental impacts from vehicle emissions.

The private vehicle is not just essential for many people, owning one is also aspirational.

The private vehicle remains convenient, even as many people complain about congestion in Hobart and the extra time it takes to commute.

Our public transport system doesn't yet offer the convenience commuters want.

The RACT survey as part of formulating its Greater Hobart Transport Vision found that bus frequency, timetabling, complicated trips and delays were the major disincentives to using public transport.

With the projections of population growth and increased vehicle ownership, the level of congestion that comes with that threatens the many other conveniences, amenity and livability that Greater Hobart citizens enjoy.

Unless we deal now with the growth that will generate more traffic on a road system with very limited capacity for expansion, those qualities that make Hobart so liveable will be sharply diminished or lost over the next 30 years.

With Tasmania having the oldest vehicle fleet at 13 years, the evolution to low and zero-emission electric and fuel-cell vehicles will take decades.

We cannot build more roads. The city's geography and the state's capacity to pay for bypasses or tunnels through existing funding regimes won't allow it and there are limited opportunities to increase capacity on existing key arterials.

Delivering transport solutions over the next 30 years will require at least two more 10-year City Deals.

To ensure long-term, fully integrated planning that is critical to Hobart's liveability, there should be certainty now over those future agreements with bi-partisan support required at all levels of government.

Since the publication of the RACT Greater Hobart Mobility Vision there has already been change forced upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a shift to working from home.

How the public and private sector deal with that change in the long term – and whether working from home is a sustainable option for employers and employees – should be the subject of further examination under the overarching transport strategy for Greater Hobart.

One of the issues that should be addressed is the tension between encouraging working from home or moving workplaces closer to where people live and the consequences for the Hobart CBD in terms of economic activity.

A complete strategy

The Southern Projects, supported and funded by the Hobart City Deal, broadly aligns with the RACT's Greater Hobart Mobility Vision 30 Year Strategy, published in 2019.

However, the projects are just one part of what should be an overarching strategy to deal with the transport challenges facing Greater Hobart.

The three initiatives outlined in the Southern Projects – A T3 transport lane on the Southern Outlet, changes to Davey and Macquarie streets and park-and-ride facilities in Kingborough – by themselves will not deliver the changes in transport modes Hobart has to have to remain a vibrant and liveable capital city.

The Southern Projects are just part of a complex set of solutions that must be tightly integrated to deliver consistent, measurable and sustainable improvements over the next 30 years.

We need to be talking about the entire puzzle, not just the individual elements as they are rolled out for public consultation.

The sets of solutions outside the Southern Projects include:

- The Derwent ferry trial.
- The new Bridgewater Bridge.
- The Hobart Airport interchange.
- Tasman Highway duplication.
- Improved infrastructure to encourage active transport.
- A rapid-transit service using the current northern suburbs rail corridor.
- Land-use planning for more medium and high-density residential development closer to the city, including land adjacent to the rail corridor.
- Park-and-ride projects in the northern suburbs and on the Eastern Shore as part of improvements to public transport.
- An integrated ticketing and information system for public transport users.
- Real-time information for vehicle drivers.
- Changes in the way we work and the times we work.
- Information technology that encourages transport choices.
- How the University of Tasmania's twin projects – moving the campus to the CBD and re-developing the current Sandy Bay campus to commercial and residential use – can lead mode change.

The data underpinning the RACT's Greater Hobart Mobility Vision highlights the urgent need for change.

- Hobart has the highest percentage of car use for commuting of all capital cities in Australia.
- A total of 84% of commuters in Hobart use a private vehicle to get to work.
- A total of 16% use other modes of transport (public transport, bicycles, motor bikes, walking).
- Of that 16%, only 6% of people use public transport to get to work.
- Another 8% walk or cycle to work.
- If we could lift that mode share to 20% it would have a significant positive impact on congestion at peak times.
- More than 50% of all employment occurs within the Hobart CBD.
- During morning peak, an average of 77% of cars from the southern suburbs, 79% from the northern suburbs and 76% from the eastern suburbs complete their journey within the city.
- Many of those vehicles are not used during the day and many are parked in inner-suburban streets.
- In 30 years the population of Greater Hobart is predicted to be 300,000.
- There is also expected to be an additional 30,000 vehicles on Tasmanian roads within 30 years.

We need a program of work and timelines to ensure that all the strands of the project come together in an orderly way, that complement each other.

For example, an integrated transport ticketing and information system needs to be ready to be rolled out as we introduce new bus services, park-and-ride services, rapid transit lanes on major arterials and Derwent ferry services.

We need to ensure we are giving commuters in private vehicles real-time information to help plan their travel for their morning commute.

We need to encourage changing work patterns, with the State Government and local government, as major employers, leading the way.

We need private and public sector employers to examine the way their employees travel, when they work, and what incentives can be offered to allow people to make different transport choices.

We need to plan land-use changes around the current northern suburbs rail corridor to encourage the medium and high-density development needed to support a viable customer base for a rapid-transit service.

Major infrastructure projects will significantly disrupt transport in around Hobart during construction so there also needs to be a strategy to deal with it. The strategy should look at the opportunities for transport mode change as these works proceed and how we encourage the switch.

The RACT, in line with its public transport policy, gives in-principle support to the concept of rapid-transit lanes such as the T3 lane proposed for the Southern Outlet as a means of encouraging mode change by making public transport more efficient and encouraging vehicle sharing.

However, we require more comprehensive data on the predicted travel times by bus when the T3 lane from Olinda Grove to Davey St-Macquarie St comes into operation, how we encourage car-sharing where vehicles with 3 persons or more on board can use the T3 lane, and how, through technology, we enforce that requirement.

The RACT also believes that a T3 lane would deliver greater benefit in terms of travel time if it was constructed as one project from Kingston, not in two stages. This should be re-examined.

We also need a communications strategy to report on progress and success, delays and problems, and measureable results, not just for the Southern Project but for all transport and infrastructure projects across Greater Hobart.

The following RACT policies inform this submission.

Public transport:

https://www.datocms-assets.com/49357/1626740700-ract-public-transport-policy.pdf

Land use planning and mobility

https://www.datocms-assets.com/49357/1626740671-ract-land-use-planning-and-mobility-policy.pdf

Active transport policy

https://www.datocms-assets.com/49357/1626740664-ract-active-transport-policy.pdf